

# Seattle Municipal Code

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Title 23 - LAND USE CODE

Subtitle III Land Use Regulations

Division 2 Authorized Uses and Development Standards

Chapter 23.49 - Downtown Zoning

Subchapter I General Provisions

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## **SMC 23.49.019 Parking quantity, location and access requirements, and screening and landscaping of surface parking areas.**


The regulations in this section do not apply to the Pike Market Mixed zones.

### **A. Parking Quantity Requirements.**

1. No parking, either long-term or short-term, is required for uses on lots in Downtown zones, except as follows:

a. In the International District Mixed and International District Residential zones, parking requirements for restaurants, motion picture theaters, and other entertainment uses are as prescribed by

Section 23.66.342 .

b. In the International District Mixed and International District Residential zones, the Director of the Department of Neighborhoods, upon the recommendation of the International District Special Review District Board may waive or reduce required parking according to the provisions of Section 23.66.342 , Parking and access.

c. Bicycle parking is required as specified in E1 of this section.

2. Reduction or Elimination of Parking Required by Permits. A property owner may apply to the Director for the reduction or elimination of parking required by any permit issued under this title or Title 24, except for a condition contained in or required pursuant to any Council conditional use, contract rezone, planned community development or other Type IV decision. The Director may grant reduction or elimination of required parking as a Type I decision, either as part of a Master Use Permit for the establishment of any new use or structure, or as an independent application for reduction or elimination of parking required by permit. Parking for bicycles may not be reduced or eliminated under this subsection. Any Transportation Management Plan (TMP) required by permit for the development for which a parking reduction or elimination is proposed shall remain in effect, except that the Director may change the conditions of the TMP to reflect current conditions and to mitigate any parking and traffic impacts of the proposed changes. If any bonus floor area was granted for the parking, then reduction or elimination shall not be permitted

except in compliance with applicable provisions regarding the elimination or reduction of bonus features. If any required parking that is allowed to be reduced or eliminated under this subsection is the subject of a recorded parking covenant, the Director may authorize modification or release of the covenant.

B. Parking Location within Structures.

1. Parking at street level.

a. On Class I pedestrian streets and designated green streets, parking is not permitted at street level unless separated from the street by other uses, provided that garage doors need not be separated.

b. On Class II pedestrian streets, parking may be permitted at street level if:

(1) at least thirty (30) percent of the street frontage of any street level parking area, excluding that portion of the frontage occupied by garage doors, is separated from the street by other uses;

(2) the facade of the separating uses satisfies the transparency and blank wall standards for Class I pedestrian streets for the zone in which the structure is located;

(3) the portion of the parking, excluding garage doors, that is not separated from the street by other uses is screened from view at street level; and

(4) the street facade is enhanced by architectural detailing, artwork, landscaping, or similar visual interest features.

2. Except as provided in subsection B1 above for parking at street level, parking within structures shall be located below street level or separated from the street by other uses, except as follows:

a. On lots that are less than thirty thousand (30,000) square feet in size or that are less than one hundred fifty (150) feet in depth measured from the lot line with the greatest street frontage, parking shall be permitted above the first story under the following conditions:

(1) One (1) story of parking shall be permitted above the first story of a structure for each story of parking provided below grade that is of at least equivalent capacity, up to a maximum of four (4) stories of parking above the first story.

(2) Parking above the third story of a structure shall be separated from the street by another use for a minimum of thirty (30) percent of each street frontage of the structure. For structures on lots located at street intersections, the separation by another use shall be provided at the corner portion(s) of the structure.

(3) The perimeter of each story of parking above the first story of the structure shall have an opaque screen at least three and one-half (3 1/2) feet high where the parking is not separated from the street by another use.

b. The Director may permit more than four (4) stories of parking above the first story of the structure, or may permit other exceptions to subsection B2a(1) as a Type I decision if the Director finds that locating parking below grade is infeasible due to physical site conditions such as a high water table or proximity to a tunnel. In such cases, the applicant shall place the maximum feasible amount of parking below grade before more than four stories of parking above the first story shall be permitted. Site size is not a basis for granting an exception under this subsection 2b.

C. Maximum Parking Limit for Nonresidential Uses.

1. Except as provided in subsection C2 below, parking for nonresidential uses is limited to a maximum of one parking space per one thousand (1,000) square feet.

2. More than one (1) parking space per one thousand (1,000) square feet of nonresidential use may be permitted as a special exception pursuant to Chapter 23.76. When deciding whether to grant a special exception, the Director shall consider evidence of parking demand and alternative means of transportation, including but not limited to the following:

a. Whether the additional parking will substantially encourage the use of single occupancy vehicles;

b. Characteristics of the work force and employee hours, such as multiple shifts that end when transit service is not readily available;

c. Proximity of transit lines to the lot and headway times of those lines;

d. The need for a motor pool or large number of fleet vehicles at the site;

e. Proximity to existing long-term parking opportunities downtown which might eliminate the need for additional parking on the lot;

f. Whether the additional parking will adversely affect vehicular and pedestrian circulation in the area;

g. Potential for shared use of additional parking as residential or short-term parking.

h. The need for additional short-term parking to support shopping in the retail core or retail activity in other areas where short-term parking is limited.

D. Ridesharing and transit incentive program requirements. The following requirements apply to all new structures containing more than ten thousand (10,000) square feet of new nonresidential use, and to structures where more than ten thousand (10,000) square feet of nonresidential use is proposed to be added.

1. The building owner shall establish and maintain a transportation coordinator position for the proposed structure and designate a person fill this position, or the building owner may contract with an

area-wide transportation coordinator acceptable to the Department. The transportation coordinator shall devise and implement alternative means for employee commuting. The transportation coordinator shall be trained by the Seattle Department of Transportation or by an alternative organization with ridesharing experience, and shall work with the Seattle Department of Transportation and building tenants. The coordinator shall disseminate ridesharing information to building occupants to encourage use of public transit, carpools, vanpools and flextime; administer the in-house ridesharing program; and aid in evaluation and monitoring of the ridesharing program by the Seattle Department of Transportation. The transportation coordinator in addition shall survey all employees of building tenants once a year to determine commute mode percentages.

2. The Seattle Department of Transportation, in conjunction with the transportation coordinator, shall monitor the effectiveness of the ridesharing/transit incentive program on an annual basis. The building owner shall allow a designated Department of Transportation or rideshare representative to inspect the parking facility and review operation of the ridesharing program.

3. The building owner shall provide and maintain a transportation information center, which has transit information displays including transit route maps and schedules and Seattle ridesharing program information. The transportation display shall be located in the lobby or other location highly visible to employees within the structure, and shall be established prior to issuance of a certificate of occupancy.

#### E. Bicycle Parking.

1. The minimum number of off-street spaces for bicycle parking required for specific use categories is set forth in Chart 23.49.019 A below. In the case of a use not shown on Chart 23.49.019 A, there is no minimum bicycle parking requirement. After the first fifty (50) spaces for bicycles are provided for a use, additional spaces are required at one half ( 1/2) the ratio shown in Chart 23.49.019 A.

Spaces within dwelling units or on balconies do not count toward the bicycle parking requirement.

Chart 23.49.019 A

Use	Bicycle Parking Required
Office	1 space per 5,000 square feet of gross floor area of office use
Hotel	.05 spaces per hotel room
Retail use over 10,000 square feet	1 space per 5,000 square feet of gross floor area of retail use
Residential	1 space for every 2 dwelling units

#### 2. Required bicycle parking

shall be provided in a safe, accessible and convenient location. Bicycle parking hardware shall be installed according to its manufacturer's instructions, and the Seattle Department of Transportation design criteria, allowing adequate clearance for bicycles and their riders. Directional signage shall be installed when bike parking facilities are not clearly visible from the street or sidewalk. When any covered automobile parking is provided, all required long-term bicycle parking shall be covered. When located off-street, bicycle and automobile parking areas shall be separated by a barrier or painted lines.

3. Bicycle parking facilities for nonresidential uses shall be located on the lot or in a shared bicycle parking facility within one hundred (100) feet of the lot, except as provided in subsection 6 below.

4. Bicycle parking for residential uses shall be located on-site.

5. Co-location of bicycle parking facilities by more than one (1) use is encouraged.

6. For nonresidential uses, the applicant may make a payment to the City to fund public bicycle parking in the public right-of-way in lieu of providing required bicycle parking on- or off-site, if the Director determines that:

a. Safe, accessible and convenient bicycle parking accessory to a nonresidential use cannot be provided on-site or in a shared bicycle parking facility within one hundred (100) feet of the lot, without extraordinary physical or financial difficulty;

b. The payment is comparable to the cost of providing the equivalent bicycle parking on-site, and takes in consideration the cost of materials, equipment and labor for installation; and


c. The bicycle parking funded by the payment is located within sufficient proximity to serve the bicycle parking demand generated by the project.


d. Any such payment shall be placed in a dedicated fund or account and used within five (5) years of receipt to provide the bicycle parking.

F. Bicycle Commuter Shower Facilities. Structures containing two hundred fifty thousand (250,000) square feet or more of office gross floor area shall include shower facilities and clothing storage areas for bicycle commuters. One (1) shower per gender shall be required for every two hundred fifty thousand (250,000) square feet of office use. Such facilities shall be for the use of the employees and occupants of the building, and shall be located where they are easily accessible to parking facilities for bicycles.

G. Off-street Loading.

1. Off-street loading spaces shall be provided according to the standards of Section 23.54.030 , Parking space standards.

2. In Pioneer Square Mixed zones, the Department of Neighborhoods Director, after review and recommendation by the Pioneer Square Preservation Board, may waive or reduce required loading spaces according to the provisions of Section 23.66.170 , Parking and access.

3. In International District Mixed and International District Residential zones, the Department of Neighborhoods Director, after review and recommendation by the International District Special Review District Board, may waive or reduce required loading spaces according to the provisions of Section 23.66.342 , Parking and access.

H. Standards for location of access to parking. This subsection does not apply to Pike Market Mixed, Pioneer Square Mixed, International District Mixed, and International District Residential zones.

1. Curbcut Location.

a. When a lot abuts an alley, alley access shall be required, unless the Director otherwise determines under subsection H1c.

b. When a lot does not abut an alley and abuts more than one (1) right-of-way, the location of access shall be determined by the Director as a Type I decision after consulting with the Director of Transportation. Unless the Director otherwise determines under subsection H1c, access shall be allowed only from a right-of-way in the category, determined by the classifications shown on Map 1B and Map 1F, that is most preferred among the categories of rights-of-way abutting the lot, according to the ranking set forth below, from most to least preferred (a portion of a street that is included in more than one of the categories in subsections i -- vii below shall be considered as belonging only to the least preferred of the categories in which it is included):

i. Access street;

ii. Class II pedestrian street-Minor arterial;

iii. Class II pedestrian street-Principal arterial;

iv. Class I pedestrian street-Minor arterial;


v. Class I pedestrian street-Principal arterial;

vi. Principal transit street;

vii. Designated green street.

c. The Director may allow or require access from a right-of-way other than one indicated by subsection H1a or H1b if, after consulting with the Director of Transportation on whether and to what extent alternative locations of access would enhance pedestrian safety and comfort, facilitate transit operations, facilitate the movement of vehicles, minimize the on-street queuing of vehicles, enhance vehicular safety, or minimize hazards, the Director finds that an exception to the general policy is warranted. Curbcut controls on

designated green streets shall be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, but generally access from green streets is not allowed if access from any other right-of-way is possible.

2. Curbcut Width and Number. The width and number of curbcuts shall comply with the provisions of Section 23.54.030 , Parking space standards.


I. Screening and landscaping of surface parking areas.

1. Screening. Surface parking areas for more than five (5) vehicles shall be screened in accordance with the following requirements:

a. Screening is required along each street lot line.

b. Screening shall consist of a landscaped berm, or a view-obscuring fence or wall at least three (3) feet in height.

c. A landscaped strip on the street side of the fence or wall shall be provided when a fence or wall is used for screening. The strip shall be an average of three (3) feet from the property line, but at no point less than one and one-half (1 1/2) feet wide. Each landscaped strip shall be planted with sufficient shrubs, grass and/or evergreen groundcover so that the entire strip, excluding driveways, will be covered in three (3) years.

d. Sight triangles shall be provided in accordance with Section 23.54.030 , Parking space standards.

2. Landscaping. Surface parking areas for twenty (20) or more vehicles, except temporary surface parking areas, shall be landscaped in accordance with the following requirements:

a. Amount of landscaped area required:

Total Number of Parking Spaces	Required Landscaped Area
20 to 50 spaces	18 square feet per parking space
51 to 99 spaces	25 square feet per parking space
100 or more spaces	35 square feet per parking space

b. The minimum size of a required landscaped area is one hundred (100) square feet. Berms provided to meet the screening standards in subsection 12 of this section may be counted as part of a landscaped area. No part of a landscaped area shall be less than four (4) feet in any dimension except those dimensions reduced by turning radii or angles of parking spaces.

c. No parking stall shall be more than sixty (60) feet from a required landscaped area.

d. One (1) tree per every five (5) parking spaces is required.

e. Each tree shall be at least three (3) feet from any curb of a landscaped area or edge of the parking area.

f. Permanent curbs or structural barriers shall enclose landscaped

areas.

g. Sufficient hardy evergreen groundcover shall be planted to cover each landscaped area completely within three (3) years. Trees shall be selected from Seattle Department of Transportation's list for parking area planting.

(Ord. [122311](#) , Section 53, 2006; Ord. [122235](#) , Section 7, 2006; Ord. [122054](#) Section 28, 2006.)